NEWLY ADDED CLAIMS

7.   (*New*) A method of allocating a protocol address to a device connected to a packet-based communication network in which devices connected to the network communicate by means of frames each including a media access control address and a protocol address, comprising:

(a)   broadcasting from a proxy separate from said device an interrogation in the form of a first control frame including a broadcast address;

(b)   receiving at said proxy a response from said device, said response being in the form of a second control frame identifying the device and including an invalid protocol address for said device;

(c)   in response to said invalid protocol address, operating said proxy to obtain an allocated protocol address for said device; and

(d)   sending from said proxy to said device a third control frame which includes said allocated protocol address.

8.   (*New*) A method as in claim 7, further comprising:

in response to the receipt of said second control frame by said proxy, operating said proxy to test potential protocol addresses for conflict with existing protocol addresses, and obtaining said allocated protocol address when conflict thereof with existing addresses is absent.

9.   (*New*) A method as in claim 8, further comprising operating said proxy to obtain said allocated protocol address for said device by means of a request addressed to a server according to a dynamic host communication protocol.

10.   (*New*) A method as in claim 9, wherein when said request is unsuccessful, automatically allocating a protocol address and testing such address for conflict with existing addresses.

11.   (*New*) A method of allocating by a proxy a protocol address to a device connected to a packet-based communication network which includes a server and in which devices connected to the network communicate by means of frames each including a media access control address and a protocol address, comprising:

(a)   broadcasting from said proxy an interrogation in the form of a first control frame including a broadcast address;

(b)   receiving at said proxy a response from said device, said response being in the form of a second control frame identifying the device and including an invalid protocol address for said device;

(c)   in response to said invalid protocol address, operating said proxy to obtain from said server an allocated protocol address for said device; and

(d)   sending from said proxy to said device a third control frame which includes said allocated protocol address.

12.   (*New*) A method as in claim 11 wherein said proxy obtains said allocated

protocol address for said device by means of a request addressed to said server according

to a dynamic host communication protocol.